

Statistics on Tropical Tuna Landings at Thai fishing ports

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Abstract

Thailand's seafood and tuna processing industry is a large-scale and high-capacity industry. Thailand's key strength as the world's largest tuna processor and exporter, particularly canned tuna, gives Thailand a strong potential in the global market. The canned tuna industry has a relatively long value-added chain, starting with raw material sourcing. Thailand relies on imports for more than 90% of its domestic demand, both fresh and frozen. Tropical tuna is the primary tuna group used for canned tuna processing. Tropical tuna is the main tuna species used in canned tuna processing, which includes three main tropical tuna species: skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye. This study compiles statistics on tropical tuna landings at Thai fishing ports over a four-year period from 2021 to 2024, import volumes and values, and tropical tuna fishing grounds in the Indian Ocean.

Key words: Tropical tuna, skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, Indian Ocean

Introduction

Thailand's seafood and tuna processing industry is a large-scale and high-capacity industry. Thailand's key strength as the world's largest tuna processor and exporter, particularly canned tuna, gives Thailand a strong potential in the global market. The canned tuna industry has a relatively long value-added chain, starting with raw material sourcing. Thailand relies on imports for more than 90% of its domestic demand. In 2024, Thailand's canned tuna production volume was 630,434 tons, accounting for 83.7% of total canned fish production volume. Of this amount, production for export reached as high as 91.9% of Thailand's total canned tuna production volume. The export value reached USD 2,498 million or THB 88,164 million, representing over 65.1% of the total export value of Thailand's processed seafood product. The main export markets by value in 2024 were the US (22.3%), Japan (9.0%), Australia (7.8%), and Libya (6.4%)

Tropical tuna is the main group of tuna used in canned tuna processing, consisting of three main types of tropical tuna: skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye, both chilling and frozen. Most of the tuna caught is from longline and purse seine fishing gear. Most tuna landings in Thailand's fishing ports come from cargo ships, which make about 40-45 trips per year.

This study compiles statistics on tropical tuna landings at Thai fishing ports over a four-year period from 2021 to 2024, import volumes and values, and tropical tuna fishing grounds in the Indian Ocean. This will reveal trends in import volumes of the three tropical tuna species, which will be useful for the management of tropical tuna fisheries in the Indian Ocean.

Material

This study collected data on the volume (tonnes), value (million USD), number of trips, and fishing areas of fishing vessels that landing at Thai fishing ports from 2021 to 2024, which were recorded and compiled by the Department of Fisheries from the Port State Measures of Thailand's inspector system.

Result and discussion

1. Statistics on landing of Topical tuna

The Volume of tropical tuna landings during 2021 - 2024 totaled 56,751.95 tons, with skipjack tuna being the largest. Next are yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna. Total volumes over the past 4 years were 45,327.73 tons, 8,382.93 tons, and 3,041.28 tons, respectively (Figure 1). In 2024, skipjack tuna landing was 2,194.21 tons, followed by 34.80 tons of yellowfin tuna and 2.50 tons of bigeye tuna.

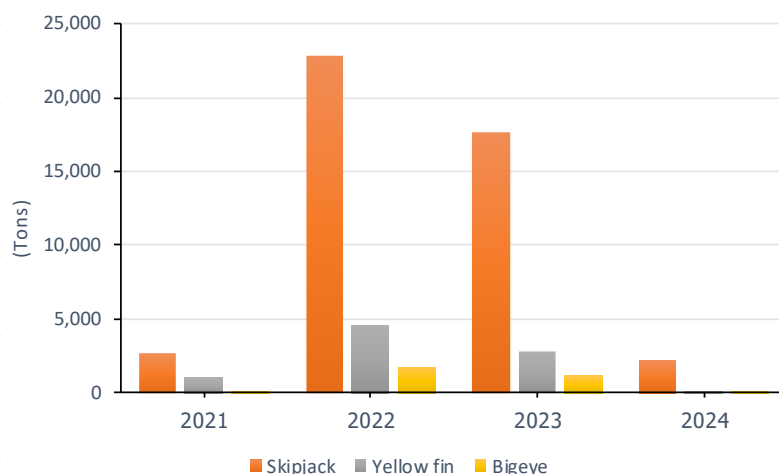


Figure 1 Tropical tuna landings in Thai fishing ports during 2021 – 2024

The volume of Tropical tuna is likely to decrease significantly in 2024, Meanwhile, the imported value is trending in the same direction. The total value of skipjack tuna yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna over the past 4 years were 84.29 million USD, 20.19 million USD, and 5.48 million USD, respectively. The highest imported tuna is skipjack tuna with 3.92 million USD, yellowfin tuna with 3.98 million USD and bigeye tuna with 0.004 million USD in 2023. (Figure 2)

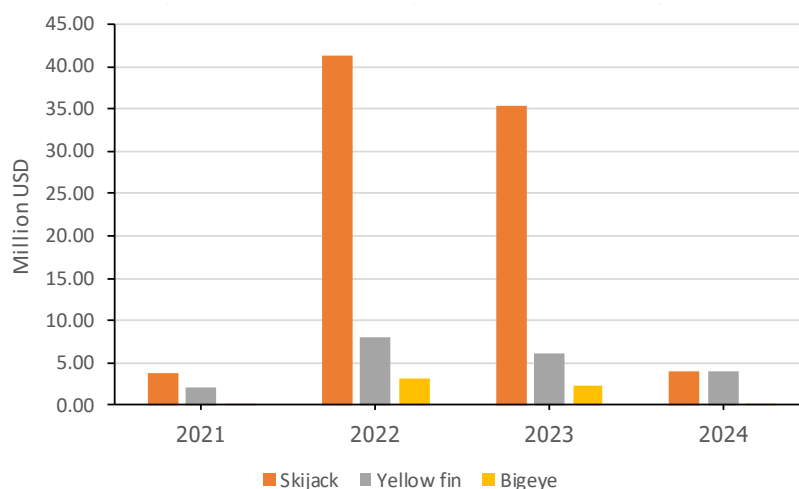


Figure 2 Value of tropical tuna imported in Thailand during 2021-2024

2. Proportion of imported tropical tuna species

The composition of Tropical tuna landings in Thai fishing ports during 2021 – 2024 found that Skipjack tuna was the largest fish landing at 79.87%, followed by Yellowfin tuna at 14.77% and Bigeye tuna at 5.36%. In 2024, a total of 2,231.51 tons of tropical tunas caught in the Indian Ocean were landed in Thailand. Skipjack tuna was the main species accounting for 98.33% of the Indian Ocean catch, followed by yellowfin tuna with 1.56% and bigeye tuna with 2.50%. Most of the imported tuna was unloaded from carrier vessels by purse seiners and longliners landing at Thai fishing ports. (Figure 3).

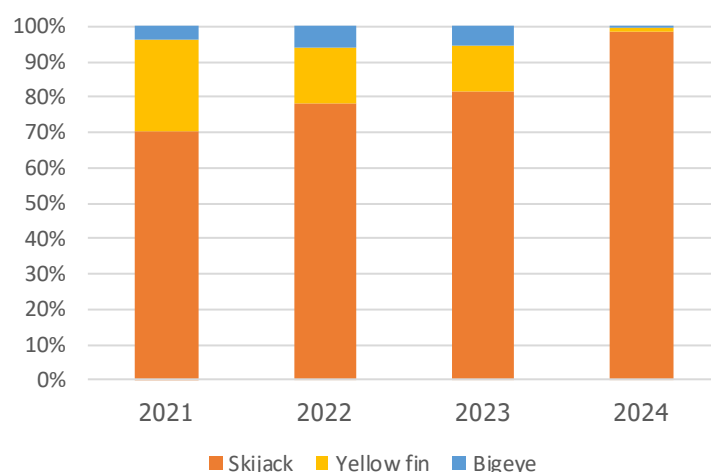


Figure 3 Proportion of imported tropical tuna species caught in the Indian Ocean, 2021-2024

The amount of tropical tuna caught in the Indian Ocean that is landed on Thailand's ports during 2021 - 2024 was in 3 areas: High Seas 51, Maldives Exclusive Economic Zone/High Seas 51 and Seychelles Exclusive Economic Zone/High Seas 51, which are mostly fished by purse seine. In 2024, the total amount of tropical tuna caught in the Maldives Exclusive Economic Zone/High Seas 51 was carried out by Maldivian fishing vessels and imported to Thailand's ports by transshipment vessels. (Table 1)

Table 1 Tropical tuna landing volumes by fishing area the Indian Ocean area during 2021 - 2024

Volume: tons

Species	2021			2022		
	High Sea 51	Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51	Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51	High Sea 51	Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51	Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51
Skipjack tuna	-	-	5,935.20	586.07	5,345.17	16,873.19
Yellowfin tuna	6.98	-	964.74	151.16	103.38	4,271.65
Bigeye tuna	5.66	-	126.20	83.55	7.95	1,698.59

Volume: tons

Species	2023			2024		
	High Sea 51	Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51	Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51	High Sea 51	Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51	Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51
Skipjack tuna	1,390.19	6,091.23	10,216.94	-	2,194.21	-
Yellowfin tuna	528.32	373.01	1,948.90	-	34.80	-
Bigeye tuna	168.23	216.24	732.36	-	2.50	-

From the table, it shows that over the past 4 years, the import volume of tropical tuna caught in the Seychelles EEZ/High Sea 51 area was the highest, followed by the High Sea 51 area and the Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51 area, with the Maldives EEZ/High Sea 51 area having the highest import volume in 2022 at 5,970.24 tons.

Conclusion

The tropical tuna landing in Thailand has 3 main species: skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye. Tuna is imported in both frozen and chilled forms. All tuna imported into Thailand is mainly used as raw materials in the processing industry. Of the total tropical tuna landed from the Indian Ocean from 2021 to 2024, skipjack tuna had the highest landed volume, which is in line with the total import value. Skipjack tuna is the main imported tropical tuna, accounting for 98.33%, followed by yellowfin tuna at 1.56% and bigeye tuna at 2.50% in 2024. Yellowfin tuna has the highest import value compared to unit price. The tuna fishing area in the Indian Ocean with the highest landed volume in Thailand is the Seychelles Exclusive Economic Zone/high seas 51.

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